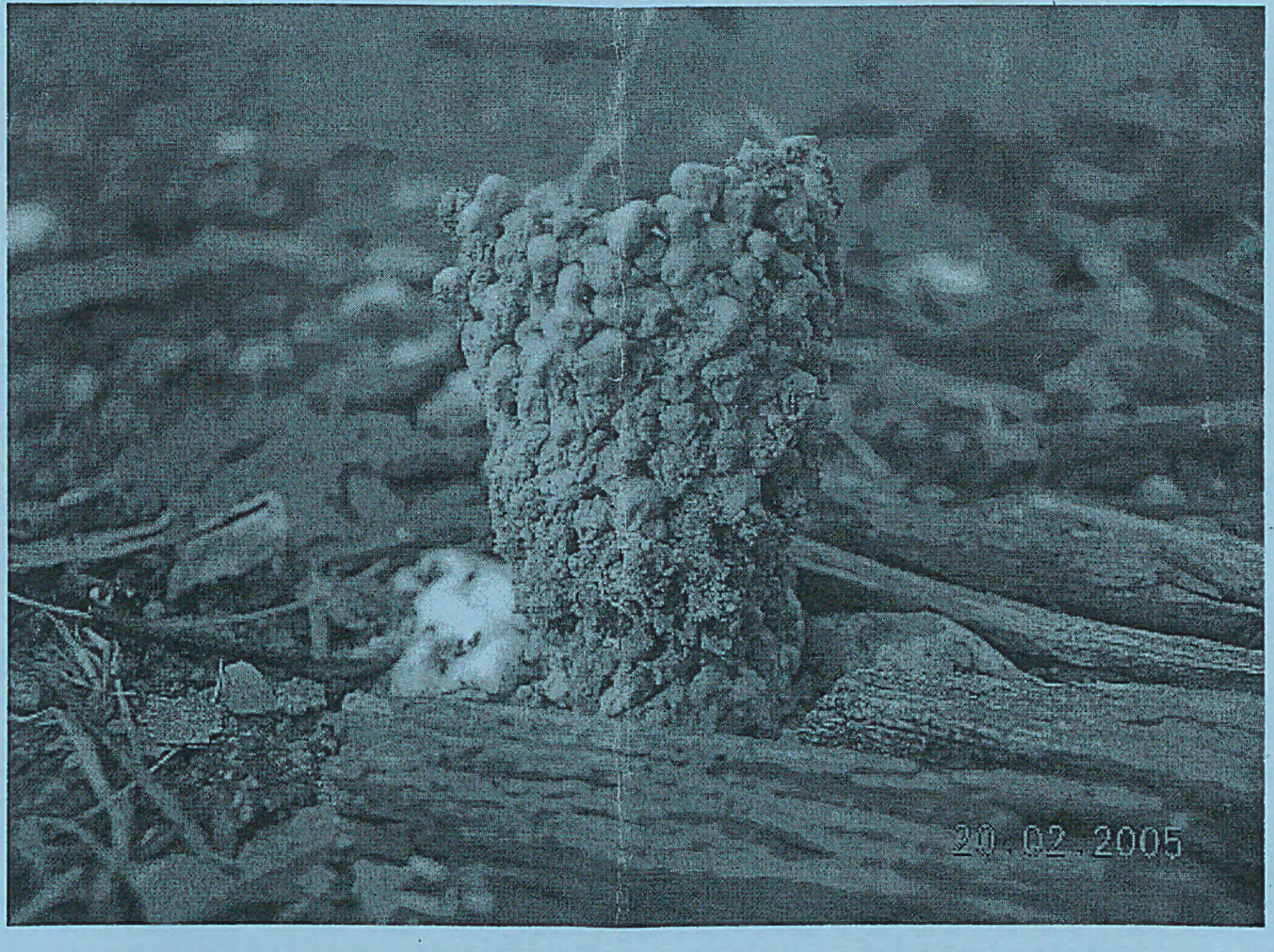
WHIRRAKEE

April 2005 Vol. 26 No. 3

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2004 - 2005

President	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Senior Vice President	Stuart Fraser	12 Bambara Close, Bendigo	
Junior Vice President	vacant		
Secretary	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo	5443 4063
		e-mail:wholsworth@bigpond.com	
Minute Secretary	Jane Cleary	24 Goynes Road, Epsom	5448 4396
	Jan Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Treasurer	Stuart Fraser		
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	done by the committee		
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo	5443 2797
		e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Rob Moors, Maurie Lewis, Glenise Moors, Rod Orr, Bob Ruddick, and there are 3 vacancies.

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.
Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front Cover Photograph:
A mysterious and beautiful structure found and photographed by Liz Martin in Mandurang at the end of February this year.
Perhaps this is made by an ant waiting for the rain? Another suggestion was that it was made by a worm or beetle larva since the individual 'bricks' seemed to have gone through an animal's gut.
Any advances on that?

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 26, No.3, April 2005

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note
When trying to capture a bee from a garden plant (ivy- hedge with grape-like flowers) to take a micrograph of its sting for the 'Bird and Bees' exhibition at the Discovery Centre, I accidentally caught a bee and a European wasp together. The reason was that the wasp was vigorously attacking the bee at the time I caught them. It took a few minutes for the wasp to completely overcome the bee and the latter ended up in three pieces while the wasp flew up ready to leave the scene of the attack. I have never observed such an attack before and was even wondering why the wasps were around this creeper. Where they there to ambush bees or were they after the pollen as well?
We miss so many little but interesting things.

BFNC Garden Working Bee

This year we again need regular garden working bees and they are usually held on the Saturday before each general meeting, at 9am.

The next working bee will be on **Saturday 9th April, 9am**

All welcome

Fauna Study Group Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at approximately 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

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125 years FNCV

The members of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.are celebrating their 125th year by holding a symposium LEAVES FROM OUR HISTORY on Saturday 28 May and Sunday 29 May at The Mueller Hall, Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne, Birdwood Ave. South Yarra, 3141. A professionally catered lunch will be served each day as well as morning and afternoon tea. The cost is $130.00 per person for the 2 days or $70.00 for one day. On Saturday evening there will be a Formal Dinner in the Mueller Hall: Cost $75.00.
Registration forms should be received by 20 May 2005 with payment. FNCV Locked Bag 3, Post Office Blackburn, 3130, Phone/Fax 9877 9860

More News from Portland

Portland Field Naturalists Club Inc. is celebrating its 60th Anniversary and has sent us an invitation to our members to attend their Celebrations. They will have a 4 course dinner on Saturday 7 May (Cost $25.00) at which there will be a Launch of the History of the Portland Field Naturalists' Club by Lois Phillips, and an Audio-visual presentation of the PFNC Zonal Reserve Concept by Doug Phillips and Ivor Graney showcasing the natural history of the area.
On Sunday, 8 May they will host a Smorgasbord Picnic at Mt. Richmond National Park. Food, tea & coffee provided by PFNC, BYO drinks.
For the dinner, RSVP by April 6 to PO Box 470 Portland, Vic. 3305 with payment. *[Editor: Since you will not receive this notice until after April 6 better phone ASAP.]*
For further information contact Ruth Graney on 5529 5335.

NCCMA Writing Competition

A WRITING COMPETITION is being organised by the North Central Catchment Management Authority together with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. The authors must live in the NCCMA and be under 18. Stories (max. 1000 words) or poems (max 40 lines) must be original, unpublished, The writing competition aims to celebrate the region's natural assets as identified in the North Central Catchment Strategy: - a blueprint for natural resource management in the region through to 2007. Further details are available on
<http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au>www.nccma.vic.gov.au
or by phoning Sandra Volk on 5448 7124. Entries close 5 pm Friday 6 May 2005.

National Bird Conference in Bendigo

As there will be a national bird conference in Bendigo in late September/early October, it was suggested, at the last general meeting, to publish a special bird edition for September. So please, write up your bird stories and save them till then. They can however be sent any time and I will keep them for the September edition (if you indicate this).

A New Book for Bendigo....
Introduced by Bill Holsworth

Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country
By Chris Tzaros
Published by CSIRO Publishing at an advertised cost of $39.95 plus $9.00 for postage and handling.
This book should be available in late April or May. In the past we have made a bulk purchase of books from publishers and received a discount. Whether this is possible for this book remains to be seen. If you would like to buy this book through the Club, please send a message to Bill Holsworth. The books will NOT be ordered until we have a firm price (delivered) from CSIRO, and your request is confirmed by you with a cheque or money order. The books will NOT be ordered if only a very few members want it, or if there is not discount for a bulk order.
The CSIRO catalogue describes the book as follows:
"The forests and woodlands of Victoria's Box-Ironbark region are one of the most important areas of animal diversity and significance in southern Australia. This book provides and overview of the ecology of the habitat and its wildlife. With detailed description of 249 species and detailed guide to where to watch the wildlife in 16 key parks and conservation reserves. 256 pages pb colour illust."

Report of a meeting between a senior CFA representative and members of the BFNC Inc.

Author: Rod Orr

You may remember some discussion, during a club meeting about 2 years ago, concerning an approach to the Council by the Golden Square CFA. The CFA requested a 10 metre wide slice along the northern edge of the Council-managed land that we were planting out and caring for as our indigenous garden.

At the time we were led to believe that their intention was to extend the Fire Station by building out onto this section of our garden. This was designed to solve several problems that they were experiencing with this cramped Fire Station, in particular, poor access to the garage for their fire trucks, the danger involved in having to reverse into the garage from High Street, which is always busy, and the need to shift other vehicles to release a more appropriate back-row fire truck for use against particular types of fire.

We made a written response to this 'plan' and heard no more. Our suggestions mainly concentrated on the need to devise a long-term solution to the problems of lack of space and access and raised the possibility of developing a new fire station on a larger site with proper access. We still believe that this is the most sensible course of action and would lend our support by suggesting how this could be achieved.

Only very recently did we hear that this proposal had not died but was merely dormant and that there were renewed moves to acquire this part of our garden, which was now even more impressive after a year and a half of rapid growth since the initial exchange of letters.

A site meeting was arranged and Jane Cleary, Bill Holsworth, Jan and Rod Orr met to discuss this issue with Mike Wassing, a senior CFA Officer on Monday morning February 28, 2005. Other interested members were either working or travelling away from Bendigo and could not attend. We thought that it was important to record and publish a brief record of this meeting so that all of our members could become better informed about this issue.

We met in the garden fairly close to the High Street entrance to the Golden Square Fire Station and had a long and thorough discussion of the issues as we understood them at the time.

The traffic on High Street made its presence felt, even though our meeting was at 10 am, safely clear of 'Peak-hour' you would have thought.

We were able to explain our attachment to this garden and to emphasise the large amount of volunteer time that has been essential to its success, and the substantial contribution of Environmental Grant funding from the Council that enabled us to prepare the site by killing weeds, mulching to control and limit weed invasion, and the purchase of suitable locally indigenous plants for the garden.

We also indicated the breadth of support for our involvement at this site by referring, not only to the Bendigo Native Plants Group and the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club, but, to our successful management of the Senior Citizens building on behalf of the Council - this previously underused Council asset is now used by a large number of community groups with a wide diversity of interests. Our garden is also becoming more widely recognised as an important 'model' waterwise garden with Coliban Water expressing interest in supporting and promoting our indigenous garden.

After covering most of the 'old ground' from our past correspondence we began to focus on what the CFA's problems really were and made suggestions about how they could best be solved.

To our great surprise, we were told that their need was only for more car parking space for their members and volunteers and that this was their intended use of this section of our garden. This would mean cutting back deep into sloping land requiring considerable excavation.

We made several other suggestions of course, pointing to other more suitable car-parking possibilities on the Bendigo side of the existing building, on the site of the existing toilet block which causes ongoing problems for the Council. There are many other car parking spaces available already in Old High Street, but, perhaps others could be developed without even encroaching significantly on this very small and shady playground and park between High Street and Old High Street, by realigning the parallel spaces to angle parking.

Our other surprise was to learn that there had been no firm proposal for any particular development of the Golden Square Fire Station and that no plans had ever been drawn up. This makes it very difficult for us to deal with, of course, as we have never been able to find out exactly what was planned and how to respond because of this lack of information. To overcome this obvious deficiency, we requested this information as soon as it is prepared by the CFA and offered to make constructive comments then, well before any final commitment.

We were taken on a brief but very interesting tour of the fire station which emphasised the cramped nature of this building and the storage and access problems involved with 4 large vehicles in the small space available.

Of course, this insight also reinforced our earlier view that the only sensible, long-term solution to these problems is relocation to a new building on a more suitable site. No matter what was done here, the pressing problems are caused by the building's inappropriate location on a site which is much too small, and located on the frontage of a very busy road which will become even busier.

Perhaps reconstructing the back wall of the building to allow a rear access and permit a drive-through garage could alleviate some problems in the short-term but with fire trucks growing ever larger, the long-term problems would remain.

Obviously, there are too many fire trucks in this small garage space and too many staff and volunteers who need to be accommodated (if only for car parking) in this inadequate site.
Halving the number of vehicles garaged at Golden Square, with the consequent reduction in staff required to drive, use, and maintain them, is an obvious, radical solution to all of their space problems at this small site, with no funding consequences at all. We haven't suggested this possible solution to the CFA or to Mike Wassing yet but, it would be interesting to see how this suggestion was received.

We were all very pleased to have met with Mike Wassing and appreciated his openness during our discussions. We offered our suggestions in good faith and he accepted them in the same spirit. We all agreed that this is the most sensible way to proceed rather than having to deal with any crisis resulting from hasty decision-making and lack of communication.

In this spirit, we await further developments and a better and more consistent flow of information from the CFA about their plans if and when these are developed to any significant degree. Given the opportunity, we will certainly respond to their plans.

Editor's note:
I got the notice below a while ago so I am not sure if the position has been filled. If you are interested it would be worth giving Lisa a call.

Volunteer Field Assistant Wanted for Bird Study in Northern Territory

I am looking for a motivated volunteer field assistant to help with a PhD project in Ormiston Gorge, near Alice Springs in central Australia, from mid-May to mid-September 2005.

Project: This study focuses on torpor use, roost site selection, home range, diet, and vocalizations of Australian Owlet-Nightjars and Spotted Nightjars in the arid zone. The work involves mist-netting, radio tracking, behavioural observations, and insect sampling. Most of the work will be conducted at night.

Requirements: Previous experience in handling birds and mist-netting is desirable but not necessary. Applicants must be very enthusiastic about fieldwork and willing to work long odd hours, usually during the night and early morning, in a remote location. You must be prepared to spend several hours each night sitting by mist-nets in cold temperatures or radio tracking birds over very rough terrain. Applicants must be in good physical condition as the work involves walking on rough, steep ground carrying equipment.
Applicants should be reliable and able to work well both independently and under direct supervision.

This position is an excellent opportunity to gain valuable field experience. I request that only those very serious in volunteering need apply.
Preference will be given to individuals that are available for the duration of the study (4 months). You will need to provide your own transportation to Armidale, NSW or Alice Springs, NT. Housing and food will be provided.
Interested volunteers please send a C.V. that includes any relevant field experience and the names and phone numbers of two referees.

Contact: Lisa Doucette
PhD Candidate
Zoology, University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351, Australia
Email: ldoucet2@une.edu.au.
Phone: (02) 6773 2885
Fax: (02) 6773 3814

March General Meeting: Speaker: Ern Perkins 'Semi-arid Australia – Mallee Vegetation'

by Sabine Wilkens

So far this year, the mallee seems to be the theme of the year. In February, we had Rob Watkins show slides of an amazing part of the mallee not normally seen by any tourists. The general interest in this part of Australia was again shown by the large number of members attending Ern Perkins' talk at the March general meeting – or did they all come to hear this speaker, no matter what he talked about? Probably a bit of both.

Ern reported on several trips through the mallee and some of the special small reserves visited on the way. A certain image arises in many people's mind when thinking of the mallee - a uniform dry and dusty place with scrubby and boring vegetation. Far from it, Ern said! The 'mallee area' in Victoria and South Australia is very varied and consists of different vegetation assemblages dominated by eucalypts, mulga, cypress pines or salt bush depending on environmental factors like soils, water availability, exposure, elevation etc We were shown many beautiful slides of the small reserves visited. Ern pointed out that all his travelling was done in a 'normal' car, i.e. not a four-wheel drive. Of course, many roads need to be travelled in dry weather only, but this can obviously be done as Ern had come back to show the slides...

Some of the mallee plants encountered were: Attractive saltbushes (*Maireana* and *Atriplex* spp.), Black Box (*Eucalyptus largiflorens*), Cattlebush (*Heterodendrum oleifolium*), Belah (*Causarina cristata*), Blue Mallee (*Eucalyptus polybractea*), Sturt Desert Pea, Dead Finish Wattle, Mulga (*Acacia aneura*), Twin Leaf (*Zygophyllum*), Pittosporum, Nitre Bush, Glasswort (*Sarcocornia* sp.), Bimble Box (*Eucalyptus populnea*), *Eremophila* spp., *Cassia,* Leafless Euphorbia, Coolabah, Pussy Tails, Bloodwood, *Amyena maideni*, a green flowering mistletoe, *Olearia muelleri.*

Place names like, Chinkapook, Manangatang, Lake Mungo, Sea Lake and Coopers Creek conjure up evocative images of the outback and probably made a few people in the audience impatient to check some of the places out themselves. There are the best talks...the ones that inspire travelling!
Ern brought with him a sheet on which he had summarised many of the reserve and their locations. This is reproduced below:

Some Small Victorian Mallee Bushland Blocks (F&FR = Flora and Fauna Reserve)

Annuello Bushland Reserve. Annuello township.

Access: At the intersection of the Hattah-Annuello Road and the Robinvale-Sea Lake Road. Both roads are sealed.

Comment: Dominated by mallee eucalypts with extensive areas of salt bush plain e.g. along the road west of the silos. Blue Mallee is present.

Bannerton F&FR. 10 km S of Robinvale.

Access: Corner of Hattah-Robinvale Rd and Robinvale - Sea Lake Rd. There are many access points e.g. from the Robinvale Road. South of the Hattah Road there is off-road parking.

Comment: Varied tree cover and understorey. Good bird area.

Barmahs Reserve. 10 km NE of Sea Lake.

Access: On the west side of the Chinkapook-Sea Lake Road. There is an access road on the south side. It may be impassable in wet weather.

Comment: Black Box forest, with a range of low understorey species.

Box Flat Bushland Reserve. Chinkapook

Access: Both sides of the Robinvale - Sea Lake Road on the northern side of Chinkapook.

Comment: Black Box with understorey.

Cocamba F&FR. Approx 8 km SSE of Manangatang.

Access: Approx 8 km S of Manangatang, turn east along a sealed road from Cocamba. The reserve is about 3 km east of he Manangatang-Sea lake Road.

Comment: A central gravel track leads south through the reserve. Mallee Eucalypts and a range of other trees and shrubs.

Angels Reset 7 km west of Culgoa.

Access: Turn west along Simpsons Road, (half way between Berriillock and Culgoa) for a little over a kilometre to the reserve.

Comment: A linear reserve. An example of the vegetation of the south-eastern mallee.

Eureka F&FR. Approx 2.5 km S of Chinkapook.

Access: Approx 2.5 km S of Chinkappok on the Sea lake Road. The reserve is on the west side. Access gates are at the N and S end.

Comment: The reserve is notable for the few eucalypts.. Buloke, Belah and Cypress Pine are abundant.

Goschen Bushland Reserve. 17 km S of Swan Hill.

Access: At Goschen on the Swan Hill - Labert Road.

Comment: A small reserve with some planted species. Good bird area.

Green Lake Regional Park. 8 km south of Sea lake.

Access: On the west side of the Sea lake - Birchip Road, 8 km S of Sea Lake.

Comment: The lake is a popular picnic and camping area. The bushland on the west side of the lake is worth visiting. It has many tracks.

Kings Billabong. Mildura.

Access: SE of Mildura city centre. See Mildura maps.

Comment: Wetlands and adjacent areas are popular picnic areas.

Lake Benanee NSW, 14 km NE of Robinvale.

Access: Is on the Balranald Road.

Comment: A large lake in wet seasons.

Lake Powell Wildlife Reserve. 15 km SE of Robinvale.

Access: Corner of Murray Valley Hwy and Hattah turnoff. A dirt road leads off the Highway.

Comment: Lake is often dry. Varied habitat. Lake Carpul is a second lake. Lake Powell Road is along the S boundary. 680 ha.

Leaghur State Park. 25 km south of Kerang.

Access: 25 km south of Kerang on the east side of the Kerang- Boort Road. Roads through the reserve are dry weather roads.

Comment: 1680 ha. Black Box grassy woodland on the floodplain of the Loddon River.

Lulla F&F R. Approx 5 km SW of Manangatang.

Access: 2 km west of Manangatang turn left off the highway along Daytrap Rd for approx 3 km.. The reserve is on the right.

Comment: A salt lake dominates the reserve. A variety of plant species can be found. There are relatively few trees

Merringur F&FR. Merringur, 80 km WSW of Mildura.

Access: Beside Merringur North Rd approx 2 km N of the Millewa Road.

Comment: The History Resources Centre and Pioneers Forest is at the Millewa Rd and Merringur North Road corner. See also Yarrara F&FR.

Moss Tank F&FR. 25 km SW of Robinvale.

Access: At the corner of the Annuello - Hattah Road and Wemen - Moss Tank Road.

Comment: Varied vegetation. The old school site on the east side of Wemen -Moss tank Road is marked by tall Sugar Gums. A water channel passes through the reserve.

Murrayville Walking Trail & FR. Murrayville.

Access: Walking trail from the roadside park in Murrayville, or from the North Road railway crossing.

Comment: Mostly mallee eucalypts. Nature trail by Murrayville Community College.

Myall F&FR. 10 km south Annuello

Access: East side of the Robinvale-Manangatang-Sea Lake Road, 10 km south of Annuello. It is necessary to cross the railway to gain access, along a bush track.

Comment: The salt lake is a major feature. Mallee eucalypts are abundant.

Toll Toll F&FR. 5 km SSE of Robinvale.

Access: On Walsh Road. From Robinvale take the Murray Valley Hwy for several kilometres and turn south along Walsh Rd for about 3 km.

Comment: An interesting block with varied vegetation.

Wakool Junction. Between Swan Hill and Robinvale.

Access: Signposted from the Murray Valley Highway. Parts of he road dry weather only.

Comment: One of many access points to the Murray through Black Box flats. Many such areas have billabongs.

Wandown F&FR. 15 km east of Annuello.

Access: Gravel Road access. From Kooloonong take the Tin Dog Road for 13 km and turn north; or take the Tin Dog Road from Annuello; this leads to the southern section.

The northern boundary can be reached from the road on the west side of Lake Powell.

The north-south road crosses the dune system and is 4WD.

Comment: The southern part is dominated by mallee eucalypts, with other species on the E-W dune ridges. 2530 ha.

Wemen F&FR. 25 km SW of Robinvale.

Access: On the south side of the Robinvale - Hattah Road. Access road leads into the reserve.

Comment; Varied mallee vegetation.

Wood Wood F&FR. Wood Wood, Murray Valley Hwy.

Access: The reserve is behind the caravan park. Access is along the road on the south (Swan Hill) side of the park, or from the road on the north side.

Comment: There is a nature trail and a multitude of tracks. Mallee eucalypts and a varied understorey.

Yarrara F&FR. 80 km west of Red Cliffs.

Access: Beside Merringur - Red Cliffs Road.

Comment: There are many interesting spots along this road .e.g along the railway reserve.

References:

Costermans L: *Native Trees and Shrubs of SE Australia*, Rigby. For identification of trees and shrubs to be identified.

McCann, I: *The mallee in Flower,* VNPA.. For flower identification.

Cunningham et al: *Plants of Western NSW.* NSW Govt Printer. Expensive. The only book you need in W NSW.

North Western Victoria, Australian Geographic map. July- Sept 1996

S.A. RAA South Australian maps show conservation parks. Brookland is a favourite.

N.S.W. Travelling stock routes reserves are often interesting. Enquire at the Hay Tourist Information Centre.

EP March 2005

From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

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THE VICTORIAN NATURALIST(FNCV)
December 2004

"Are Intertidal Invertebrates adequately protected in Victoria?" outlines the current safeguards for these marine creatures. The area studied was Western Port. Threats include over-exploitation, habitat loss and alteration, poor water quality and introduced species and pathogens.

"The occurrence of Hooded Plovers in Port Phillip Bay" is a review of reports of this species inside the bay. Hooded Plovers are generally confined to ocean beaches but several are reported to have been seen inside the heads. The writers sought information to confirm each sighting.

"Are wide riparian strips better for birds and frogs than narrow ones?" was the subject of a stream survey conducted in western Victoria. Several bird species were more common in the wider strips but width did not appear to be relevant in the case of the four species of frogs. Habitat features may be more important for the latter.

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PARKWATCH(VNPA)
March 2005

"The impact of channel deepening on fish in the Yarra" looks at the potential effect on fish populations of the lower Yarra. The dredging proposals are not limited to Port Phillip Bay, with five million tonnes of riverbed sediments to be removed from the river.

"Controlling English broom in the Alps" describes the extent of the broom problem prior to the 2003 fires, the effect of the latter, and the subsequent eradication program now under way.

"Decision time for the red gum forests" reports on the forthcoming investigation by the Victorian Environment Assessment Council of the riverine forests along the Murray River between Yarrawonga and Swan Hill, including Barmah and Gunbower.

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Also received recently:

Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC)

Ballarat Naturalist(BFNC)

Geelong Naturalist(GFNC)

Field Nats News(FNCV)

Newsletter(Mid Murray FN)

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Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Guest Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings 2005

Second Wednesday of the month, 8:00 pm

Please check each ***WHIRRAKEE*** for additional events or changes.
The general meeting will start at 7:30pm, with the speaker being introduced at 8:00pm.

Date - 2005	Topic	Speaker
April 13	'Conservation of the Koala'	Rolf Schlagloth (Australian Koala Foundation)
May 11	'Mapping of remnant natural vegetation in NW Victoria'	Alison Oates (Arthur Rylah Institute)
June 8	'Fungi of the Box-Ironbark forests and the Fungimap project'	Tom May (Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne)
July 13	'Co-operative breeding behaviour of tree-creepers (with particular reference to the White-browed Tree-creeper)'	Jim Radford (Research Fellow, Deakin University)
August 10	'Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Hooded Scalyfoot and other rare reptiles'	Peter Robertson (Wildlife Consultant)
September 14	AGM 'Studies of the road edge effect in box and ironbark forest' (however, speakers and topic still to be finalised)	Zoe Pocock and Ruth Lawrence ? (La Trobe University)
October 12	'Xanthorrhoea - ecology and flowering'	Mark Bellette (University of Melbourne)
November 9	'Owls of the World'	David Hollands (Wildlife Photographer)
December 14	Christmas Diner. 'The Giant Gippsland Earthworm - conservation issues'	Neville Rosengren (La Trobe University)

latest news.... PhD Scholarship available

Title: Germination physiology and conservation ecology of significant flora at a nickel mine, Ravensthorpe, Western Australia.
Background: The site for a nickel mine contains a significant flora including a high degree of speciation and local endemism Several plants known only from this area are priority listed by the Western Australian government or are undescribed Rehabilitation aims to establish an ecosystem that mirrors the function and composition of the pre-mining vegetation Achievement of this aim is constrained by fundamental knowledge gaps in the germination physiology and ecology of loca species. The PhD candidate will work in collaboration with the minesite environmental officer and scientists of the Department o Conservation and Land Management in gaining better knowledge and understanding of the seed physiology, germination an conservation ecology of selected species to improve establishment and survivorship.
Stipend $24, 650 pa (+ expenses for field work and experiments)
Joint Project between: Ravensthorpe Nickel Project, CALM (Department of Conservation and Land Management, WA) and the University of Western Australia.
To apply: Please send a CV, including academic record and the names and contact details of at least 2 referees to Julie Plumme (see contact details below) by **Friday 31 April 2005**
Contact: Assoc Prof Julie Plummer, Plant Biology, Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Sciences, University of Western Australia 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley WA 6009. Phone (08) 6488 1786/1782; Fax (08) 6488 1108; Email: jplummer@cyllene.uwa.edu.a (please put PhD Scholarship in the Subject line)

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, April 13 7.30pm
Rolf Schlagloth from the Australian Koala Foundation will talk about 'Conservation of the Koala'.

Wednesday, May 11 7.30pm
Alison Oates from the Arthur Rylah Institute will be talking about 'Mapping of remnant natural vegetation in NW Victoria'.

Fauna Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.
The following is a guide for the discussion topics for this year's meetings (subject to change).

Apr 27th - Symbiotic Relationships
May 25th - Termites
Jun 22nd - Koala
Jul 27th - Scat identification

Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at approximately 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Bendigo Field Naturalists on the web

Any comments about the site are most welcome.

http://communitysites.impulse.net.au/bendigofieldnaturalists/fnats.html

BFNC Garden Working Bee

This year we again need regular garden working bees and they are usually held on the Saturday before each general meeting, at 9am.

The next working bee will be on **Saturday 9th April, 9am**

All welcome

60 years of Portland FNC

Portland Field Naturalists Club Inc. is celebrating its 60th Anniversary and has sent us an invitation to our members to attend their Celebrations. See page 3 for details.

125 years of FNCVictoria

The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.is celebrating its 125th year by holding a symposium LEAVES FROM OUR HISTORY on Saturday 28 May and Sunday 29 May at The Mueller Hall, Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne, Birdwood Ave. South Yarra, 3141. See page 3 for details.

NCCMA Writing Competition

A WRITING COMPETITION is being organised by the North Central Catchment Management Authority together with the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

See page 3 for details.